

For many students, the creation of a piece of writing is a mysterious process. It is a laborious, academic exercise, required by teachers and limited to the classroom. They do not see it as a way of ordering the mind, explaining their thoughts and feelings, or achieving a personal voice. Even more problematic for students is the ability to interpret primary documents and/or political cartoons as a source while creating a higher order work within a written document.

Primary documents and political cartoons of a specific era of time present on the spot historical evidence that may or may not require the student to have other specific factual information surrounding the event. Often students fail to understand that primary documents/political cartoons are merely witnesses to the historical times. Just as witnesses are questioned in the courtroom in hopes of fleshing out more specific information, students need a technique to flesh out an interpretation of the primary document/political cartoon. One such strategy is known as S.O.A.P.S. This strategy will allow students to become “Historical Scene Investigators” of a particular moment in history. A primary document can be viewed as an actual witness to the historical event; the H.S.I. needs a technique to collect the evidence for the particular witness

I: S.O.A.P.S. The acronym S.O.A.P.S. provides students with prompts that provide them with a strategy for dissecting and interpreting primary documents/political cartoons for higher order synthesis when juxtaposed with specific factual information.

Who is the Speaker? When interpreting the primary document or political cartoon, the student should immediately try to determine the speaker of the document. Sometimes this is easily identified as the primary document may have a source to it that readily identifies the speaker. Yet in other instances the speaker may be confused with the author of the primary document who may be witness to an event including the speaker. Once the speaker can be identified, the central focus for the student can now become: What facts are known about the speaker and/or author? What are possible assumptions about the speaker’s frame of reference and point of view? Note: **(The source of document and any symbols used in the document can add to the document’s voice.)**

What is the Occasion? Often when interpreting primary documents, students need to be able to determine the time and place that prompted the documents creation. Where and when was the source produced? And, how might this affect the meaning of the document? Once determined, the occasion can help students interpret the larger experiences/events of the time that the primary document originated from, allowing for students to draw conclusions on the attitudes and emotions of the document.

Who is the Audience? Primary documents more than likely have an audience that they intend to address. It may be one person or a specific group of people. In determining the audience, students need to address the frame of reference and point of view of the audience while attempting to determine how the primary document addressed the needs of the intended audience. Once the audience is established students can make inferences as to how this might affect the reliability of the primary document.

What is the Purpose? Students need to consider the purpose of the text in order to develop the argument and the logic of the primary document. Students need to make assumptions about the reasons behind the primary document. The purpose may help establish inferences as to why the document originated. For example, was the document intended to be a form of propaganda?

What is the Significance? Why is this primary document important? This is the last component to the process and is often times the written component for students. After going through the process of fleshing out the information in the primary document, students should be able to compose a **definitive statement(s)**. The definitive statement(s) may draw conclusions about the primary document in relation to a larger question asked or prior specific factual information the student had as prior knowledge.

II. Conclusions: Students with a strategy tool such as S.O.A.P.S begin to possess the ability to frame questions for higher-order historical investigation. Students gain the ability to develop inferences about the primary document, which may allow them to either prove or disprove the historical task/thesis being tested. Teachers can further facilitate the process by using the following question bank once students have completed the S.O.A.P.S.

- ✓ What interesting facts/characteristics do you notice in the above document?
- ✓ What questions are raised about the information?
- ✓ What inferences can be drawn from these questions?
- ✓ What evidence is there in the documents to support these inferences?
- ✓ What insights about this historical period have been gained from this document?

Sources: Adapted from Alan Lockwood, Methods Professor, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Mr. Tom Howe, Teacher, Monona Grove High School, and the College-Board.

S.O.A.P.S.

Document: _____ **Reviewers** _____

Subject

Think about the information the document conveys.

Form an overall impression and then examine individual items or specific parts.

1. What is the general topic?
2. What are three things the author said that you think are important?

Occasion and Audience

What type of document is it?

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper | <input type="checkbox"/> Poster | <input type="checkbox"/> Letter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advertisement | <input type="checkbox"/> Drawing | <input type="checkbox"/> Diary entry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leaflet | <input type="checkbox"/> Map | <input type="checkbox"/> Memorandum |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flyer | <input type="checkbox"/> Photograph | <input type="checkbox"/> Legal record |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Speech | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

What are the unique physical qualities?

- | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Handwritten | <input type="checkbox"/> Typed | <input type="checkbox"/> Signature |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Picture, symbols | <input type="checkbox"/> Seal(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> Notations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Letterhead | <input type="checkbox"/> Stamps | <input type="checkbox"/> Caption |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Official stamp: i.e., date, "RECEIVED," "PAID" | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | | |

Support each answer with document evidence:

1. Who was the intended audience?
2. When was the document created or circulated?

Purpose

1. Why do you think this document was created?
2. What specific evidence in the document helps you know why it was created?
3. What does the document convey about life in the United States at the time it was created?
4. What questions does the document raise?
5. What questions do you have for the author of this document?

Speaker

Think about the occupation, gender, religion, nationality, and class of the creator of the document.

1. Who created the document? and how do you know?
2. What position or title did he or she hold? And how do you know?
3. What biases might he or she have? And how can these biases influence the document?
4. Whose voice is not represented in the document?
5. Why do you think that voice was left out?

Image Analysis Worksheet

Step 1: Observation

A. Study the image for 2 minutes. Form and write a first impression of the image below.

B. Use the chart below to list people, objects, and activities in the image:

PEOPLE	OBJECTS	ACTIVITIES

Step 2: Inference/Deduction

Based on what you have observed above, list three things you might conclude from this image.

1.

2.

3.

Step 3: Further Questions

1. What questions does this image raise in your mind?

2. Where could you find answers to them?

Artifact Analysis Worksheet

1. Type of artifact

Describe the material from which it was made: bone, pottery, wood, stone, leather, glass, paper, cardboard, plastic, cotton, fur, or other material

2. Uses of the artifact

A. What might it have been used for?

B. Who might have used it?

C. Where might it have been used?

D. When might have it been used?

3. What does the artifact tell us about life at the time it was used?

A. What does it tell us about technology of the time in which it was made and used?

B. What does it tell us about the life and times of the people who made it and used it?

C. Can you name a similar item today?

4. Draw a picture, find a photograph, or bring the artifact you listed in 3C above to class.

Map Analysis Worksheet

1. Type of map

- ☐ physical map (shows natural features like rivers, lakes, etc)
- ☐ political map (shows the location/boundaries of cities, counties, etc)
- ☐ economic map (shows products like crops, minerals, etc)
- ☐ population map (shows where people live and how many live in each area)
- ☐ other kind of map

2. Physical qualities of the map (check all that apply)

- ☐ handwritten
- ☐ compass
- ☐ date
- ☐ legend or key
- ☐ title
- ☐ name of mapmaker

3. Date of map: _____

4. Creator of map: _____

5. Where was the map produced? _____

6. Map information:

A. List three things in this map you think are important

1.

2.

3.

B. Why do you think this map was made?

C. What conclusions can you make about the information on this map?

D. Does this map support information you have read about this event or subject?
Explain.

E. Write a question to the mapmaker that is left unanswered by this map.

Cartoon Analysis Worksheet

Level 1

Visuals	Words (not all cartoons include words)
1. List the objects or people you see in the cartoon.	1. Identify the cartoon caption and/or title. 2. Locate three words or phrases used by the cartoonist to identify objects or people within the cartoon. 3. Record any important dates or numbers that appear in the cartoon.

Level 2

Visuals	Words
2. Which of the objects on your list are symbols? 3. What do you think each symbol means?	4. Which words or phrases in the cartoon appear to be the most significant? Why do you think so? 5. List adjectives that describe the emotions portrayed in the cartoon.

Level 3

A. Describe the action taking place in the cartoon. B. Explain how the words in the cartoon clarify the symbols. C. Explain the message of the cartoon. D. What special interest groups would agree/disagree with the cartoon's message? Why?
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